

Mountains, it was said, even by those not given to the theory of absolute rigidity, had their roots too deeply set to admit of changes now. An elevation of a few hundred feet on one side of the Alleghanies and coast ranges, and a corresponding depression on the other side, being in all a change of gradient to the extent of only one foot in 5,000, might be quite within comprehension. In volcanic regions isolated hills might rise, like Jorullo, which, after eighty days of earthquakes and subterranean thunder, was suddenly lifted out of a plain, some 1,700 feet; but as for such an event in a settled region like ours—that was only the frenzied dream of a lunatic! Nevertheless, such assurances, though comforting and well meant, were empty, and the deeply-seated source of the intumescence which had raised the coast regions caused a strain which, with a sudden crack, tore the crust in twain. We hardly know at which point the rent began, but in an hour or so it seemed to have extended from both sides, after the manner of a tear across a sheet of paper. The shock of this parting of the strata was tremendous. The fissure formed near Charleston, in 1888, might have been taken as a forerunner of it, just as the sinking of the earth at New Madrid, in 1811, might have been seen to be a presage of the depression of the Mississippi valley. If the accounts of the shaking of buildings, the falling of church towers, the twisting of railroads, the inrush of ocean waves, the loss of life, which were given by the journals of those days, were multiplied a hundred fold, some idea would be given of the catastrophe which wrecked New York and Boston. The latter place had suffered much by the destruction of its harbor, though it had managed to handle some of the Government imports at a new port which came into existence some miles out to sea, where vessels had a roadstead to lie in and discharge into lighters. New York had not fared so ill as one might have thought; the Hudson, still flowing through its gorge, had after a long effort cleared out its own old channel, and large vessels could still come to a point not more than five miles from the Battery, whence means of transfer had been hastily extemporized. This shock, however, was at its worst there, though it terribly injured Montreal and Quebec to the north, and Washington, Richmond, and other cities to the south, all being near the new-formed anticlinal. The cities were very crowded at the time with refugees from many cities of the late Mississippi valley, including a number from Chicago, that great mushroom growth which arose like vernal lilies—like them bloomed with exceeding beauty, and like them lasted but for a day. The fissure yawned hundreds of feet in width, taking no account of hills or valleys, but crossing the whole with an impartial rending. Then, indeed, was an hour of misery and blank despair. It had been observed before, that, however terrible the destruction man might bring upon his kind by war, no campaigns could be so destructive to life and treasure as shocks of earthquake, and the force of the remark was now fully realized. No count of the deaths, injuries, or losses was possible at the time, nor has it been since. As in the days of old, the numbering of the people of Israel seemed to imply vain-glory, and an attribution to man of results due to the higher law; so, after such a terrible loss—a million of lives, a million of crippled and maimed bodies, hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of what had been private property—it was at once felt that estimates of the loss, or attempts to measure the chastisement we were suffering under, would be useless, perhaps impious; that irreparable ruin had come upon the land—the ruin, that is, of all old things and systems—that we should have to repeat the experience and the methods of the Years of Migration in new forms, and deal with the victims of this new